

Internship with The Smithsonian Institution Center for Folklife & Cultural Heritage

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Category: Internship
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Major: Biology & Cultural Anthropology

What I Learned:

While working on this project, I became particularly intrigued by the concept of traditional and alternative medical practices and how a stigmatizing western scientific bias can potentially hinder medical progress. Through this project, I learned a great deal about one of the world's oldest medical disciplines and opened my eyes to new ways of thinking.



Project Description:

The summer after junior year, I spent two and a half months interning at the nation's flagship museum and center for intellectual inquiry. At the Smithsonian's Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage, I got to work with some of the nation's leading curators in the field of cultural preservation, documentation, and presentation. I was tasked with elucidating the historical, medicinal, and cultural importance of Ginseng in Traditional Chinese Medicine. My work is now kept in the Smithsonian archives and will be showcased at the 2020 Festival on the National Mall.



Transformational Experience:

Under the guidance of my supervisor, Dr. Betty Belanus, I learned more about myself: who am I as a person? How do I want to make my mark on the world? This internship allowed me to come closer to understanding my post-graduation goals. As a result of the extensive research I did with the Smithsonian, I reaffirmed my goal to pursue an M.D./PhD in medical anthropology. I hope to one day use my knowledge of cultural differences to further the medical field and break down divisive barriers to healthcare success.



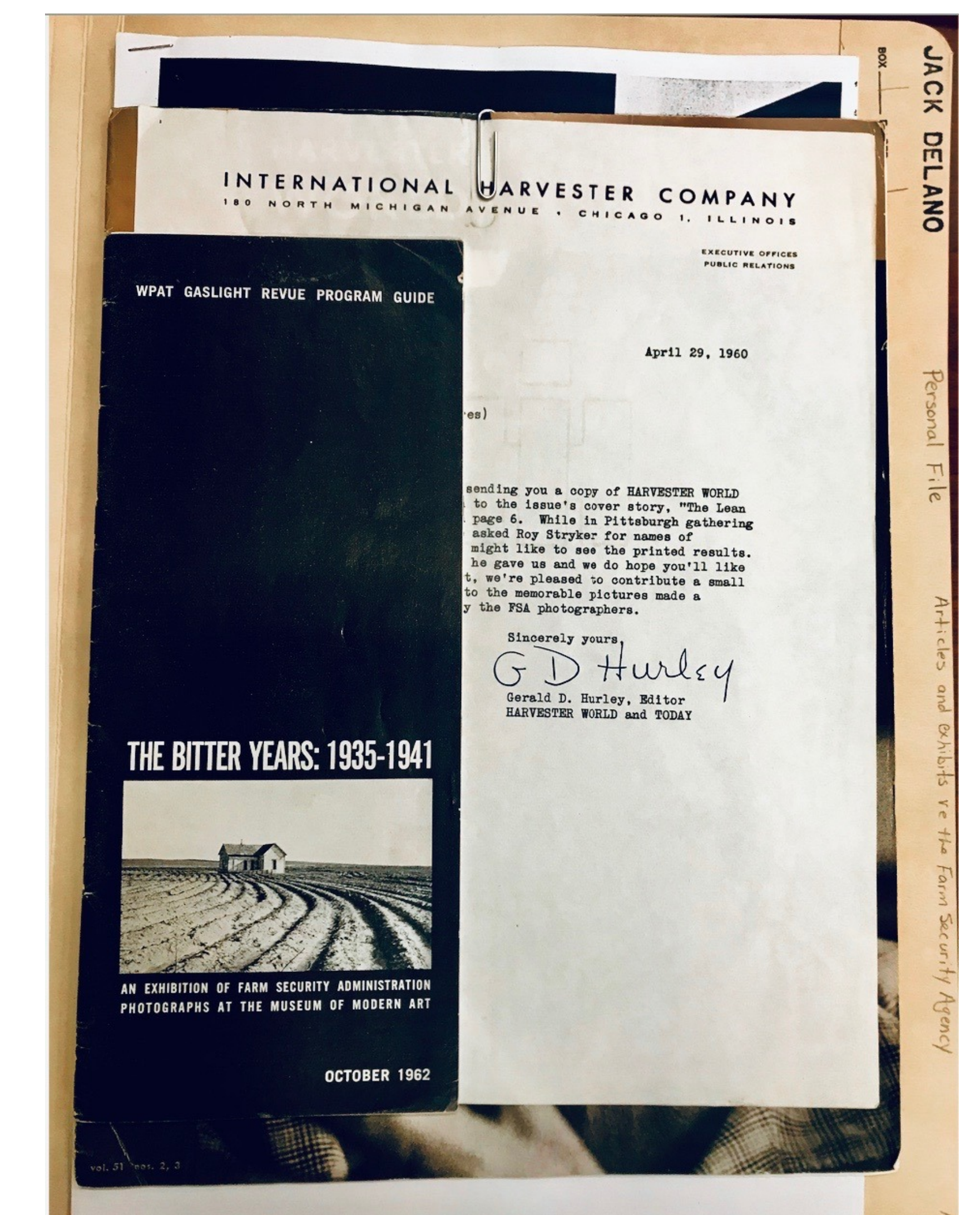
Why I Chose This Project:

My educational path has always been varied. As a pre-medical student double-majoring in biology and anthropology with a history minor, I have a wide variety of interests. My goal has always been to find a way to unite my interests and use them to further my main discipline, medicine. When I heard about the opening for this internship position, I thought it was the perfect way to balance my scientific and artistic interests and further my career goals.



Favorite Part of the Experience:

While I really enjoyed the work that I was doing during my internship, my favorite part was actually meeting new people with similar interests. I made a few great friends that I still keep in touch with who are on similar career paths and I also gained a few great mentors who I hope to keep in contact with as I continue to navigate the world of academia.



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